

VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHUL #0324/01 0610746
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 020746Z MAR 09
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3438
RUCPDO/USDOC WASHDC 8189
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC//DDI/OEA//
RHHMUNA/USCINCPAC HONOLULU HI//FPA//
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC//DB-Z//

UNCLAS SEOUL 000324

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/K, EAP/PD, INR/EAP/K AND INR/IL/P
TREASURY FOR OASIA/WINGLE
USDOC FOR 4430/IEP/OPB/EAP/WGOLICKE
STATE PASS USDA ELECTRONICALLY FOR FAS/ITP
STATE PASS DOL/ILAB SUDHA HALEY
STATE PASS USTR FOR IVES/WEISEL

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [ECON](#) [KS](#) [US](#)

SUBJECT: PRESS BULLETIN - March 3, 2009

Opinions/Editorials

- [1](#)1. Regrets about Secretary Clinton's Visit to Seoul
(Hankyoreh Shinmun, March 2, 2009, Page 26)
- [1](#)2. Critical Moment for the Six-Party Process
(Hankyoreh Shinmun, February 28, 2009, Page 23)

Features

- [1](#)3. Does the U.S. Put More Emphasis on Direct Talks with N. Korea
Than on the Six-Party Talks?
(Chosun Ilbo, February 28, 2009, Page 4)

Top Headlines

Chosun Ilbo, All TVs
Opposition Democratic Party Officials Attack Ruling Party Lawmaker
during Scuffles over Media Reform Bills

JoongAng Ilbo
Ruling Party Chairman: "We Can Submit Revisions to Media Ownership
Bill to Prevent Large Businesses from Owning Stakes in Terrestrial
Broadcasting Networks"

Dong-a Ilbo
Dong-a Ilbo Campaign to Help People Find Jobs

Hankook Ilbo
With National Assembly Speaker's Mediation Efforts, Rival Parties
Hold Late-Night Negotiations to Reach Compromise
on Disputed Bills

Hankyoreh Shinmun
"Household Debt Bomb" Ticking;
Household Loan Default Rate Reaches a Dangerous Level

Segye Ilbo, Seoul Shinmun
Rival Parties Narrow Differences over Disputed Media Bills

Domestic Developments

- [1](#)1. President Lee Myung-bak, in a speech yesterday to mark the 90th
anniversary of the March 1 Independence Movement, said that Seoul

will respect agreements between the two Koreas and is ready for dialogue. He was further quoted as saying: "The two Koreas need to start dialogue soon. If North Korea gives up its nuclear ambitions, the ROK will help the North." (All)

12. According to a Foreign Ministry official, Stephen Bosworth, the U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy, will visit Seoul around March 7-8, after visiting China and Japan, in order to discuss the North's missile and nuclear issues. (JoongAng, Hankyoreh, KBS, MBC)

13. According to the (North) Korean Central News Agency, the North Korean military sent a message to the ROK military on Feb. 28 warning of a clash along the Military Demarcation Line (MDL). The North argued that the "provocative actions" of U.S. troops and "those in violation" of the armistice agreement were getting worse along the MDL. (JoongAng, Hankook, Segye, Seoul, all TVs)

14. Citing North Korean sources, conservative newsletters in the ROK specializing in North Korean affairs said yesterday that Kim Jong-un, the youngest son of the North's leader Kim Jong-il, is the heir apparent. (Dong-a)

15. A group of U.S. lawmakers called on the Obama Administration on Feb. 26 to swiftly deliberate on the KORUS FTA awaiting ratification in Congress. (Hankook, Segye, Seoul, KBS)

Media Analysis

North Korea

The ROK media over the weekend gave prominent attention to the Feb. 26 appointment of Stephen Bosworth as Washington's Special Representative for North Korea Policy and the appointment (sic) of Sung Kim, Special Envoy to the Six-Party Talks, as the chief U.S. delegate to the talks. The ROK media reported that Stephen Bosworth is due to travel to Seoul, Tokyo, Beijing and Moscow to consult with Washington's partners in the Six-Party Talks. In a related development, most of the ROK media today cited an ROK Foreign Ministry official as saying that the Ambassador Bosworth will visit Seoul around March 7-8, after visiting China and Japan, in order to discuss the North's missile and nuclear issues.

The ROK media also noted the appointment of Chief ROK Delegate to the Six-Party Talks Kim Sook as the vice chief of the ROK's intelligence agency, reporting that Seoul will soon appoint Kim's replacement. Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo commented in an inside-page report on Saturday (Feb. 28) that the change of chief ROK and U.S. envoys to the Six-Party Talks, coupled with new North Korea policies under President Barack Obama, might generate fresh momentum in the long-stalled Six-Party Talks. Conservative Chosun Ilbo's headline, meanwhile, wondered: "Does U.S. Intend to Give More Weight to Bilateral Negotiations with North Korea than Six-Party Talks?" Conservative Dong-a Ilbo headlined its story: "U.S. Embarks on Efforts to Find a Solution to the North's Missile Problem Through the Six-Party Talks." Moderate Hankook Ilbo wrote in the headline: "Obama Administration's North Korea Process Moves into High Gear." Left-leaning Hankyoreh Shinmun editorialized: "The Obama Administration has already said that it wants a comprehensive approach, one that deals with the North's abandonment of its nuclear programs, signing of a peace agreement, normalization of U.S.-North Korea ties, and energy and economic aid all at the same time. Mr. Bosworth's swing tour needs to be a time for getting into the specifics of that approach. First priority will have to be the missile problem. Even if Pyongyang launches a satellite, like it claims it will, the negative aftereffects will still be serious, with potential sanctions and harm being done to the momentum of the Six-Party process. We would hope that Bosworth will meet with the North this time around."

The ROK media today widely quoted President Lee Myung-bak as saying in a speech yesterday to mark the 90th anniversary of the March 1 Independence Movement: "Seoul will respect agreements between the two Koreas and is ready for dialogue. If North Korea gives up its nuclear ambitions, the ROK will help the North."

Nationalization of Citigroup

Right-of-center JoongAng Ilbo editorialized today: "The problem is

that the nationalization of Citigroup represents the start, not the end, of Washington's surgery on the U.S. banking industry. The USG should be swift and bold in restructuring its banking industry. If it hesitates to do so, it will throw not only the U.S. financial system but also the entire world financial system into chaos."

Opinions/Editorials

Regrets about Secretary Clinton's Visit to Seoul
(Hankyoreh Shinmun, March 2, 2009, Page 26)

By Yonsei University Prof. Moon Jung-in

U.S. Secretary of State Clinton's visit to the ROK is still a subject of conversation. Koreans praise her for her diplomacy. Also, her visit has removed lingering anxiety that Koreans have harbored over the Lee Myung-bak Administration's policy on North Korea.

However, there are some regrettable aspects to her visit. She remarked that she would focus on listening to other countries during her journey. But in her two-day itinerary, she rarely seemed to be listening carefully but kept on talking, delivering high-profile lectures to the public. Perhaps, she did not need to listen since she had all the answers to almost all issues.

Her position on North Korea appeared little different from that of the Bush Administration except her perception of the high-enriched uranium program. It seemed as if former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was visiting again. The Obama Administration vowed to advance smart power diplomacy based on "the power of balance" (the concept of balanced diplomacy) departing from high-handed unilateralism. But it seemed different in reality. Secretary Clinton's comment on the North's power struggle was ill-considered since any remark on the North's succession issue is practically taboo. Such a remark is improper and might wrongly hint that the North is undergoing a sudden change or collapse. Her official comment on a possible crisis over a power struggle in North Korea may adversely affect the U.S.-North Korea ties.

In addition, Secretary Clinton failed to take a balanced approach. She proclaimed that North Korea will not gain a different relationship with the U.S. if it refuses to talk to the ROK and criticizes the ROK. She duly stood by the ROK as a close ally. But she should have thought more carefully into why developments had unfolded this way. She should have urged the ROKG to improve ties with the North in order to achieve balanced diplomacy.

It is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade that gained most from Clinton's visit. Except in the area of the KORUS Free Trade Agreement (FTA), President Lee Myung-bak and the conservative forces obtained everything they coveted. They apparently dealt a blow to their critics. But it is doubtful that this kind of diplomacy adopted by the ROK really suits its national interests. Pressure from the U.S. will not bring the North to the negotiating table. Instead, this would only aggravate the North's antagonism toward the Lee Myung-bak Government and jeopardize peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. It is regrettable that the ROKG has not learned any lesson from the Kim Young-sam Government's failed policy on North Korea.

Critical Moment for the Six-Party Process
(Hankyoreh Shinmun, February 28, 2009, Page 23)

U.S. emissary Stephen Bosworth will be visiting the Six-Party countries of South Korea, China, Japan and Russia (sic) next week.* Also, U.S. State Department diplomat Sung Kim will be the new head of the American delegation to the Six-Party Talks. (sic) The head of China's delegation, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Wu Dawei, went to Pyongyang last week to discuss resuming the talks. Diplomatic efforts to resolve the North Korean nuclear and missile crises are going into full swing.

(The) Most important (thing) is the attitude of the U.S., since its approach will determine a lot about the overall landscape. The Obama Administration has already said it wants a comprehensive

approach, one that talks about the North doing away with its nuclear programs, a peace agreement, normalization of ties between Pyongyang and Washington, and energy and economic aid all at the same time. Bosworth's swing tour needs to be a time for getting into the specifics of these goals. The Six-Party principle of "action for action" remains valid, but it would be all too easy,, as has been the case in the past, to fall into a tiresome wrangling over the details. There must be no instance where the individual interests of countries party to the process hinder the larger framework of comprehensive negotiations.

(The) first priority will have to be the missile problem. Even if Pyongyang launches a satellite, as it claims, the negative aftereffects will still be serious, with the potential of sanctions and lost momentum to the Six-Party process. We hope that Bosworth will meet with the North this time around. The North has no reason not to talk if the U.S. appears ready to do so. The U.S. must not let it look like it wants to see North Korea isolated.

Pyongyang, in turn, must not miss the opportunity in the U.S.' wholesale review of its North Korea policy. The nations that are party to the Six-Party process are ready to listen seriously to the conditions for nuclear abandonment that Pyongyang wants to talk about. If the Obama Administration is unable to build a framework for constructive discussion early on, the international community's perceptions of North Korea are going to grow even colder. What Pyongyang needs to do first and foremost right now is to halt its missile launch plans. It is regrettable that Kim Myong-kil, a diplomat at North Korea's mission to the United Nations, says his country is going to go ahead with the "satellite launch." It is wrong to be narrowing the scope of mutual trust so early on in the process.

South Korea needs to be proactive in supporting the comprehensive approach and U.S.-North Korean contact. It must absolutely refrain from behavior that harms the process if it is not going to do what it can to increase the pace of U.S.-North Korean dialogue. It would be a step backwards to mistakes of the past, like (those made by) President Kim Young-sam, to seek to make improved inter-Korean relations a condition for progress in U.S.-North Korean relations. It is primarily the responsibility of the authorities of North and South Korea to resolve the problems of their relationship.

* (Ed. Note: EAP Press guidance of February 26 says that Ambassador Bosworth will visit Beijing, Tokyo and Seoul and will consult with Russian officials who will travel separately to the region.)

* This is a translation provided by the newspaper, and it is identical to the Korean version.

Features

Does the U.S. Put More Emphasis on Direct Talks with N. Korea Than on the Six-Party Talks?
(Chosun Ilbo, February 28, 2009, Page 4)

By Reporter Lim Min-hyok

There will be a change in the status of the Six-Party Talks aimed at resolving the North Korean nuclear issue.

The Six-Party Talks, which took effect in August 2003 to revolve the North Korean nuclear issue, will see a significant change in their status and character. The Obama Administration has named Bosworth as a senior emissary for U.S. engagement with North Korea. This indicates that the U.S. intends to revolve the North Korean nuclear issue through the dual channels of the U.S.-North Korea high-ranking talks and the Six-Party Talks.

The dual channels of the U.S.-North Korea bilateral talks and the Six-Party Talks will be put in place.

The Obama Administration emphasizes that Special Representative to North Korea (Policy) Bosworth is a Deputy Secretary-level official who reports directly to the Secretary of State and the President, like Special Envoy to the Middle East (Peace) Mitchell and Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke. (sic)*

Secretary Clinton stressed that Bosworth is a senior official in charge of the North Korean nuclear issue.

Clinton said, "Bosworth will address a variety of concerns including not only the North Korean human rights issue and humanitarian issue but also the North's nuclear issue and proliferation of mass destruction weapons."

Regarding Sung Kim's appointment as Special Envoy to the Six-Party Talks, she added, "He will undertake daily duties by working closely with Bosworth."

Since the North's nuclear test was conducted in October 2006, the U.S.-North Korea talks have remained within the framework of the Six-Party Talks. But it is observed that now the Obama Administration wants to put separate 'high-level talks' in place, which stand on a higher footing than the Six-Party Talks. This policy is similar to that of the Clinton Administration which attempted to settle the North Korean issue through U.S.-North Korean bilateral talks.

Therefore, it seems that while Bosworth draws the big picture through talks with North Korea's first Vice Foreign Minister Kang Sok-ju, Special Envoy Sung Kim will discuss the detailed measures in the Six-Party Talks.

In this case, if the ROK and the U.S. fail to cooperate fully, the ROK could become isolated from the talks as it happened in 1993 and 1994 when the North Korean nuclear crisis broke out.

Bosworth may talk with Kang Sok-ju soon.

With Bosworth appointed as Special Representative to North Korea, (sic)* the first U.S.-North Korea high-level talks in the Obama Administration are expected to be held soon. Bosworth said at a press conference that he would tour Korea, Japan, China and Russia (sic) ** starting next week to seek ways to come to grips with the North Korean issue.

Asked whether he would contact the North during his scheduled visit, he left the possibility open, saying, "It depends on the result of consultations during the visit." Some say that upon completing his tour of four countries, (sic) he may visit North Korea to meet with the North's first Vice Foreign Minister Kang Sok-ju. Bosworth, who visited North Korea in early February, sent a favorable message to North Korea, saying, "I had an impression that North Korea is well aware of the benefits it would gain from living together with the outside world and the country is ready to go forward."

A diplomatic source from Washington said, "There is a possibility that the Obama Administration will resolve the missile crisis and initiate comprehensive talks on nuclear weapons and missile launches by pushing for Bosworth's visit to North Korea."

* (Ed. Note: Ambassador Bosworth's title is U.S. Special Representative for North Korea Policy. Mr. Mitchell's title is Special Envoy for Middle East Peace and Mr. Holbrooke's title is Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan.)

** (Ed. Note: EAP Press Guidance of February 27, 2009 says that Ambassador Bosworth will visit Beijing, Tokyo and Seoul and that he will also consult with Russian officials who will travel separately to the region. It does not say that he will travel to Russia.)

Stephens